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FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

P. O. Box 2604

Washington, D. C. 20013

22 March 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: William Eames  
U.S. Information Agency

SUBJECT: FBIS Comment on Soviet Media Expansion with Suggested  
Videotape Material

REFERENCE: Request by Director  on 19 March 1985

Bill:

1. Attachment A includes some FBIS observations on Soviet efforts to use television in reaching Western and Third World audiences as well as their continuing program to upgrade television broadcasting in the Soviet Union. I'm sure much of this information is already available to you but thought you would want our views in any case.

2. Attachment B lists several videotapes we have on hand that might be useful in preparing the visual you are planning. The Ogarkov and Gromyko press conferences illustrate the Soviet attempts to use meetings with the press to explain or argue their positions. The docudrama is an example of using feature material to put the United States in a bad light. If you want any of the tapes mentioned, give me a call.

3. Let me know if I can do anything further.

Director

STAT

Attachments

cc: Gerald Campbell, Asst to Director USIA

SUBJECT: FBIS Comment on Soviet Media Expansion with Suggested Videotape Material

DDS&T/FBIS/J [ ] (22 Mar 85)

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Attachment A

EXPANSION OF SOVIET MEDIA EFFORT

1. Soviet public statements have consistently pictured a war between two opposing ideologies, in which the West has heavily invested in an effort to spread its repertory of "dirty tricks"--from designer jeans to rock music--and uses shortwave broadcasting to sway the minds of listeners in the Soviet Union and the Third World. The top Soviet leadership has in effect rationalized the heavy outlay of resources for foreign broadcasting operations on grounds that the West--in the words of Konstantin Chernenko in June 1983--is attempting to launch "an information-propaganda intervention against us." Chernenko continued:

We must increase the persuasiveness, timeliness, attractiveness, and interest of our materials intended for foreign audiences, effectively revealing the concrete substance of our peaceloving international policies.

2. The Kremlin's strong interest in expanding Soviet television capabilities, however, is focused chiefly on an effort to upgrade TV aimed at the Soviet domestic audience. Soviet media's report on an August 1984 politburo meeting noted that the Politburo expressed its interest in "the development of multi-channel color broadcasting and the significant elevation of its quality." A front-page editorial in PRAVDA on 19 October elaborated on shortages and poor quality of television

equipment in the Soviet Union and lamented that "many regions, mainly remote rural areas" of the country, were still unable to receive television programs.

3. Moscow's primary strategy for getting its message across to the international television audience appears to lie in an effort to use Western television rather than to expand its own international capabilities. Illustrations of the strategy are (1) widespread use of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference as a new forum for expressing Soviet views to the foreign press in Moscow and (2) the use of American television reporters as channels for publicizing "interviews" with the top Soviet leaders:

- Since July of last year the Foreign Ministry has held 30 press conferences, heavily focused on arms control issues and obviously aimed at the Western press, since they were given little play in Soviet domestic media. Moscow's appreciation of the press conference as a vehicle for spreading its message was exemplified in 1983 after the KAL shootdown when General Ogarkov used a televised briefing to make the Soviet case.
- In November 1984 and February 1985, Moscow released replies by then General Secretary Chernenko to questions from two American television correspondents--Marvin Kalb of NBC and Stuart Loory of Cable News Network.

4. Another manifestation of this strategy is Moscow's readiness to make its spokesmen available for appearances on American newspanel discussions programs. Just last Sunday (17 March), for example, S. Menshikov, an advisor to the Central Committee, appeared on one of the major networks' Sunday discussion shows. Joe Adamov was a commentator for NBC during Chernenko's funeral, as he had been during Andropov's funeral, and Vladimir Pozner is a fairly frequent participant on ABC's "Nightline."

5. In the Soviet Union itself, there is a continuing effort to upgrade and expand domestic radio and television facilities. One problem being addressed is the matter of making Soviet television and other media available to Soviet citizens in the many remote areas of the country. This effort is continuing, although the Soviets are at the point where additional progress is difficult and costly. Indications are that currently more than 90 percent of the population receives the first television program and close to 50 percent receives the second (with the latter figure continuing to climb).

6. The variety of programs available, at least in the more populated areas, is expanding. Within the past 6 months, for example, a number of major transmitting towers have either been commissioned or are nearing completion. Soviet reports note that inhabitants in the expanded coverage areas will be able to receive "four radio and six TV channels" in Kazakhstan's capital, Alma-Ata, or "five TV and four radio programs" in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, to name only two recent examples.

7. The delivery of domestic television programming via satellite is also developing and expanding. For example, the Soviet Union has an EKTRAN satellite system operational designed for direct transmission to home receivers. Moscow has plans to launch a satellite system known as LUCH which more closely resembles a true Direct Broadcast by Satellite system. This satellite is to operate in the Ku band with enough power to permit the use of small receiving dishes. The program is behind schedule and no satellites have yet been launched.

8. Current Soviet open media reporting of telecommunications activities suggests the USSR will continue for the foreseeable future using a variety of methods to expand domestic radio and television coverage, all the way from building traditional broadcasting towers (although higher and with more powerful transmitters), to building microwave and cable networks, to expanding their satellite network and mix.

9. INTERSPUTNIK, an international telecommunications organization formed by Moscow and its East Bloc allies originally, has now expanded to 14 signatory members, including Afghanistan, Laos, Vietnam, South Yemen, North Korea, and Cuba. INTERSPUTNIK actively seeks outside business, particularly in the Third World. INTERSPUTNIK uses transponders on three Gorizont satellites, which with the acquisition of the use of the third satellite in late 1984 gives it virtually worldwide coverage. All traffic goes through ground stations in the Soviet Union; thus no transmissions direct from one user to another are possible.

10. A major user of INTERSPUTNIK is INTERVISION--the East Bloc counterpart to EUROVISION. INTERVISION distributes television programming offered by INTERSPUTNIK members among the various network users. Some Third World and even U.S. customers have used the system. India used INTERSPUTNIK for the better part of a year after a U.S.-built satellite failed on launch. Ted Turner's Cable News Network took relays of the Bloc's 1984 Friendship Games in Moscow.

11. INTERSPUTNIK's charges to users are less than INTELSAT's. It remains to be seen over the long run what impact that may yet have, particularly in view of the increased coverage INTERSPUTNIK now enjoys.

12. The Soviet Union's international radio broadcasts are transmitted in 80 languages and dialects. Outside the Soviet Union, Radio Moscow uses transmitters in Bulgaria, Cuba, East Germany, and Mongolia to relay certain programming. It is also known to transmit programs over local radio facilities in some of the target countries.

13. As of May 1984, TASS transmitted an international service in Russian radioteletype to unspecified recipients, as well as a transmission to Hanoi and one destined for XINHUA in Beijing. These transmissions have not been observed recently, however, and it is possible they have gone to satellites. Only a few TASS transmissions remain on shortwave. These include Arabic transmissions to the Arab world; English to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and West Africa; French to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and West Africa; and in Portuguese to unspecified recipients.

Attachment B

VIDEOTAPE EXAMPLES OF SOVIET TV PROPAGANDA

The following videotapes in the FBIS collection may be useful in demonstrating Soviet television efforts to (1) reach foreign television audiences and (2) attack the United States in the international arena.

Tape No. 1 - General Ogarkov's press conference on the KAL shootdown (Moscow TV 1225 GMT 10 September 1983)

Tape No. 2 - Gromyko press conference (Moscow TV 1500 GMT 13 January 1985)

Tape No. 3 - Feature program, from the series "TASS Is Authorized to State," docudrama on fictitious CIA effort to overthrow African government (18 tapes in all) (Moscow TV 30 July-9 August 1984)